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ABSTRACT

One of a series of seven modules developed to improve the knowledge and skills of vocational educators who are or will become involved in the instruction of handicapped students in regular (mainstream) classes, this module focuses on understanding attitudes and feelings involved in teaching handicapped students and on exploring ways of developing a climate of positive attitudes to support instruction of handicapped students in regular classrooms. Specifically, the purposes are (1) to understand something about attitudes and how they affect learning and other behaviors, (2) to understand the bases for attitudes which can affect success in teaching handicapped students in regular (mainstream) classes, (3) to develop practical living skills in solving problems which involve attitudes and feelings that can affect success in teaching handicapped students in regular (mainstream) classes. Information is presented in a question and answer format, with key questions underlined and with key answers set off in boxes. Exercises, comments, and examples have been integrated into the instructions to help the user organize and consolidate information which has just been presented. An assessment section is included to help the user demonstrate his/her ability to apply the information in practical ways. (Author/HD)

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MAINSTREAMING THE HANDICAPPED IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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Developing a Positive Attitude

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The Consortium of the California State University and Colleges

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Vocational Education Support Unit

Statement of Understanding Between the Vocational Education Support Unit and the Special Education Support Unit

Background

The Vocational Education Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-576) has as one of its purposes the development of vocational training and retraining programs for handicapped persons.

To insure that such training is realistic with respect to the special needs of handicapped persons, the Act requires that state leadership in special education services and vocational education services enter into cooperative planning and program implementation arrangements.

Purpose

The purpose of this statement of understanding is to assure continued and augmented cooperation between the staffs of the Special Education Support Unit and the Vocational Education Support Unit of the State Department of Education in such actions as the following:

1. The joint development of provisions in the State Plan for the vocational education of handicapped persons in California
2. The joint review of those applications for funds for programs of projects providing benefits to handicapped persons.
3. The joint development of appropriate programs and project activities to meet the vocational education needs of the handicapped.
4. The joint development of appropriate inservice training of teachers for the handicapped and of vocational education teachers working with the handicapped.
5. To provide for intradepartment and interdepartment communication to facilitate program evaluation.

This statement of understanding is intended to formalize and recognize the working relationship that has long existed between these two services within the California State Department of Education.

For the Vocational Education Support Unit:

Signed: Samuel L. Barrett

State Director of
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For the Special Education Support Unit:

Signed: Leslie Brinegar

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Reprinted from California State Plan for Vocational Education. California State Department of Education, 1976.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Statement of Understanding Between the State Board of Education, the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, and the Department of Rehabilitation

Background

The Vocational Education Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-576) has as one of its purposes the development of vocational training and retraining programs for handicapped persons.

To insure that such training is realistic with respect to the special needs of handicapped persons, the Act requires that state leadership in special education services and vocational education services enter into cooperative arrangements.

Purpose

The purpose of this statement of understanding is to assure continued and augmented cooperation between the Department of Rehabilitation staff, the State Board staff, and the Board of Governors staff in such actions as the following:

1. The development of provisions in the State Plan for the vocational education of handicapped persons in California.
2. The review of applications for funds for programs or projects providing benefits to handicapped persons.
3. The development of appropriate programs and project activities to meet the vocational education needs of the handicapped.
4. The development of appropriate inservice training of teachers for the handicapped.
5. To provide for interdepartment communication to facilitate program evaluation.

This statement of understanding is intended to formalize the working relationship between these state agencies.

For the Department of Education and the State Board of Education:

Signed: Wilson Riles

Superintendent of Public Instruction, Director of Education, and executive secretary, State Board of Education

For the Department of Rehabilitation:

Signed: Gary Tacorne

Acting Director, Department of Rehabilitation

For the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges:

Signed: I. W. Braaman

Chancellor and the executive officer, Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges

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Instructional Section

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- Whose attitudes are involved in the instruction of handicapped students in regular education classes?
- What are the bases for some common attitudes which discouraged success in teaching handicapped students in mainstream classes?
- What are some common bases for attitudes which discourage success in teaching handicapped students in mainstream classes?
- What are some common bases for attitudes which support success in teaching handicapped students in mainstream classes?
- How can important attitudes which are relevant to success in teaching handicapped students in mainstream classes be identified?
- What factors are important in encouraging positive attitudes toward handicapped students?

Introduction

This is one of a series of modules developed by the American Institutes for Research to improve the knowledge and skills of vocational educators who are or will become involved in the instruction of handicapped students in regular (mainstream) classes.

This module focuses on understanding attitudes and feelings involved in teaching handicapped students and on exploring ways of developing a climate of positive attitudes to support instruction of handicapped students in regular classrooms.

The general purposes of this module are:

1. To understand something about attitudes and how they affect learning and other behaviors;

2. To understand the bases for attitudes which can affect success in teaching handicapped students in regular (mainstream) classes; and

3. To develop practical living skills in solving problems which involve attitudes and feelings that can affect success in teaching handicapped students in regular (mainstream) classes.

The module is organized under three major units which correspond to the purposes listed above. Each unit contains basic information presented in a question and answer format, with key questions underlined and with key answers set off in boxes. Exercises, comments, and examples have been integrated into the instructions to help the reader organize and consolidate information which has just been presented. Finally, an assessment section has been included so that you can demonstrate your ability to apply this information in practical ways.

Understanding Attitudes and How They Are Formed

- What is an attitude?
- What are some important characteristics of attitudes?
- How are attitudes identified?
- How are attitudes formed and changed?
- Why are attitudes often difficult to change?

What is an attitude?

An attitude is a predisposition to respond in an evaluative manner to some object or concept. A more simply stated definition would be that an attitude is a tendency to respond in either a positive or a negative way to something. Whichever definition is used, they essentially mean the same thing. This can be seen more easily in the following statement.

> An attitude is a tendency, predisposition, or inclination to respond, act, or behave in a positive, negative, evaluative, or judgmental way to something (person, object, concept, etc.).

It will be helpful to have a definition of attitude in mind in order to understand some of the important characteristics of attitudes which will be discussed on the following pages.

Of particular concern in this module are the attitudes of teachers, parents, school administrators, and non-handicapped students which affect the learning of handicapped students who are in regular classes.

People, in general, may have attitudes about anything. People have attitudes about things such as fudge ripple ice cream, mushrooms on pizza, loud motorcycles, flower gardens, renaissance art, cabbages, kings, students with handicaps, wheelchairs, glasses with thick lenses, and

hearing aids. People may also have attitudes about concepts, conditions, or ideas such as the construction of dams on wild rivers, the rights to own arms for self protection, the value of a college education, marriage, blindness, deafness, being crippled, or teaching handicapped students in regular (mainstream) vocational education classes.

Most attitudes are complex and it is seldom easy to understand why and how they developed. Nonetheless, as we shall see later, it is important to understand the bases for these attitudes.

Attitudes may be either positive or negative and may vary greatly in strength. If there is a tendency to evaluate something as very good, then the attitude is described as strongly positive. If there is a tendency to evaluate something as very bad, then the attitude is described as strongly negative. Most attitudes, however, are probably somewhere in between, and can be described as mildly positive or mildly negative. If there is no tendency to evaluate something, either as mildly good or mildly bad, then the attitude is neutral. Or, for all practical purposes, there is no attitude. Just how attitudes develop and increase or decrease in strength will be discussed later under the heading, "How are attitudes formed and changed?"

While intensity of feelings is primarily responsible for the strength of attitudes, information obtained from experiences also provides support for attitudes. The more information that a persons has to support an attitude, the harder it will be to change the attitude.

For example, a young man may want very badly to learn to work on his car. Yet, because of a history of frustration and failure in school work and school situations, he does not want to take the automobile shop class at school. He wants to learn to work on his car at home in his own garage, and by working with friends on their cars. His parents, however, tell him that in order to become a good mechanic he needs to take the course at school. They insist that if he doesn't, he will never learn all of the important basic skills. This young man has a strong negative attitude toward taking the automotive shop class at school, but he doesn't have any factual information to support his feeling. In fact, the only

information he does have (his parents thoughts on the matter) suggest that he must take the course if he ever expects to become really good at working on cars. Now suppose that the young man learns that one of his friends, who happens to be a very good mechanic, has never had a single course on automobile repair--this friend learned everything from working at gas stations with friends, and on his own. This now provides the young man with some information which will support his negative attitude toward taking the automobile shop class at school.

> Attitudes change when there are changes in the intensity of feelings and/or changes in the information base which supports the attitude.

Attitudes are changed through new experiences which prove different from previous experiences. There are basically two ways of changing attitudes through new experiences. They are: (1) through experiences which either increase or decrease the intensity of the feeling associated with the attitude about something and (2) through experiences which change the information base that supports the attitude.

> Different people may have considerably different attitudes.

One person may have a strong positive attitude about an issue such as conserving energy and resources and a mildly negative attitude about television shows with violence. Someone else may have different attitudes about the same issues. One person may feel that students who require modifications to the classroom environment, curriculum materials or presentation of instruction in order to properly benefit should be in special classes with specially trained teachers. Another person may feel that children should be placed in special classes only if it is not possible for the regular classroom teacher to individualize materials and methods enough to make them appropriate for these children. Yet another person may feel that all children should be taught in regular classrooms regardless of their special needs.

There are many reasons, as we shall see later, to support their various attitudes toward teaching children with special needs in mainstreamed classrooms.

> As a review of the material that has just been presented, consider the following question: "What is an attitude?"
>
> See if you can write down a reasonable definition of an attitude.
>
> Recalling that people can have attitudes about anything (objects, concepts, ideas, conditions, statements, etc.), see if you can write down some examples of attitudes that people might have. Include some examples of attitudes that vary in strength, mildly negative, strongly negative, mildly positive and strongly positive. Also include some examples of different people having different attitudes about the same thing.

What are some important characteristics of attitudes?

> Attitudes predict behavior.

Since attitudes are tendencies to respond in either a positive or a negative way, it follows that more often than not people will behave in ways consistent with their attitudes. If we know, then, what a person's attitude toward a given thing or idea is, we have a good chance of predicting how that person will respond to it. A student's positive attitude toward typical learning activities such as reading, writing, and math, has long been recognized as an important condition for success in school. A teacher, for example, often points to a student's "good attitude" as being a key ingredient to having performed well in the classroom. Similarly, an employer knows that an employee with a positive attitude about his/her work is more likely to do a good job. Conversely, a "bad attitude" is often cited as a reason for failure. It is this relationship between a positive attitude and success which is of great importance to the teacher of handicapped students. It means, for example, that an instructor in restaurant service skills can create positive attitudes in his students

about such things as correctly setting a table, and learning to take customer orders, there is a better chance that the students will learn those skills.

Unfortunately, the prediction of behavior from knowledge of attitudes is often more complicated in actual practice than is readily apparent. For example, if a student has a positive attitude toward learning to operate a latne, we can predict that the student will be more likely to pay close attention to what the instructor says, to follow directions, and consequently to acquire the necessary skills than a student with a negative attitude. However, the same student may also value being accepted by his peer group. If,then, one of the standards for acceptance by the peer group is to maintain a casual attitude toward classroom instruction, the student is caught in a conflict. Although he may genuinely want to master the skills being taught the student may act as though he does not.

Attitudes about certain people, objects, or concepts often <u>generalize</u> to others.

Another important characteristic of an attitude is that an attitude toward a given object or concept may <u>generalize</u> to another object or concept, even though the two objects or concepts may be quite different in some ways. An example of this can be seen in the behavior of salespersons. People are more likely to buy something from someone they like and trust than from someone they dislike and distrust. Therefore, before attempting to sell a product to a customer the salesperson may first attempt to establish a positive attitude in the customer toward him. This is done through friendly talk which shows the customer that the salesperson is knowledgeable, likeable and trustworthy. Having established a positive attitude in the customer, the salesperson is more likely to be successful in selling the product. In other words, the customer now has a positive attitude toward the salesperson which may generalize to what he says and ultimately to the product being sold.

The behavior of teachers provides another example of how attitudes may generalize. Teachers often begin a class by attempting to establish good rapport with the students. Essentially, they are attempting to create positive attitudes in the students toward them so that these attitudes once established will generalize to what they wish to teach.

> Attitudes can be contagious - they maybe transmitted from one person to another.

A third important characteristic of attitudes is that attitudes are contagious. One person's attitude affects another person's attitude. Of particular importance in a classroom situation is the teacher's attitude. If the teacher's attitude toward the students and toward the value of learning information and skills that he teaches is positive, then there is a much greater chance that the students' attitudes toward the teacher and learning will also be positive. The attitudes of other students in the class may also be important in a classroom setting. For example, if a large number of students in the class have a positive attitude about learning to sew, then there is a good chance that others in the class will also develop a positive attitude about learning to sew. On the other hand, if many students have a negative attitude about learning to sew, there is a good chance that the negative attitude will spread to others. For this reason, it is important that a teacher be able to recognize attitudes as they begin to develop, so that he can promote attitudes that will support instructional goals.

After the first day of class with a new group of students, have you ever been concerned over the attitudes of many of the students about learning what you were going to teach? Perhaps, a number of students appeared to be more interested in talking among themselves than in learning about the course outline and planned activities. Some may have made comments like, "Why do we need to learn that?", and "Who wants to make one of those?". Although many of these occurrences are common on the first day of class, the experience probably caused you some anxiety. Why? Very likely you were worried that if their attitudes continued that you would be in for a tough year. Students would be uninterested in the classroom activities. Many students would not complete assignments. Few students would really learn the skills you were going to teach. And, there would be lots of discipline problems. In short, your assessment of students' attitudes on the first day predicted a tough semester with lots of problems and few rewards for you, the teacher. It was this predictive characteristic of the students' attitudes that caused your concern. You knew what to expect if those attitudes prevailed, and you didn't like it.

Now let's suppose that you are also teaching another class in the morning in a different subject area, and that a lot of the students in this morning class are also in the other (afternoon) class where bad attitudes prevail. By contrast, the students' attitudes in the morning class appear to be very good. This situation, however, also causes you concern. Why? You are probably worried that the bad attitudes these students have shown in afternoon class might generalize to the morning class.

Let's also suppose one other thing; there are a few students in the afternoon class who in spite of the negative attitudes shown by most of the students, appear interested and motivated to learn. However, you are concerned that these students may not keep their good attitudes. Why? Because you know that attitudes in a classroom tend to be contagious. It is difficult for a few students to take the class seriously, when the majority of students do not.

How are attitudes identified?

Attitudes are difficult to assess.

In order for an instructor to change negative attitudes he must first be able to identify the attitudes he wishes to change.

Since attitudes are by definition tendencies to behave and not actual behaviors, we cannot see or witness attitudes. How do we find out what a person's attitudes are? One way is to ask him directly. This may be the very best way to find out how someone really feels about something. However, it may also be an impractical or imprudent thing to do. Another way of identifying attitudes, the one which is probably used most often, is to infer attitudes from behaviors. This is possible since we know that people tend to behave in ways which are consistent with these attitudes. We can often reasonably infer what a person's attitude toward some object or concept is and how strong it is by observing his behavior. People reveal their attitudes through words, gestures, and actions.

For example, if a person often puts in more time than is required at work, and if they often express satisfaction with what they are doing, then based on these behaviors, we might reasonably suppose that the person has a good attitude about his work. On the other hand, if a person is habitually late for work,always leaves at the first possible minute, and frequently grumbles about what he has to do, then we might reasonably suppose that this person has a bad attitude about his work.

However, inferring attitudes from observed behaviors can be tricky business. What might appear to be an expression of a positive attitude toward one thing might really be an expression of a positive attitude toward something else. For example, a typing student might always pay close attention in class, never fail to hand in homework assignments, and perform well on tests, but still dislike typing. It could be that the student works hard because he wishes to please the teacher or because the student always tries to excel in any school activity. In this case, paying close attention in class, handing in homework assignments on time, and performing

well on tests were really expressions of a positive attitude toward the teacher and toward the idea of always doing one's best rather than an expression of a positive attitude toward typing.

> Attitudes can be identified by asking people directly how they feel about something, or by observing the behavior of people with respect to the object or concept we are interested in, but a combination of both ways is probably best.

If the behaviors that are observed are consistent with a student's expressed feelings toward something, this is probably our best estimate of what the student's attitude really is.

> Suppose you are planning to enroll a boy in your machine shop class who is crippled and dependent on a wheelchair for getting around. There are a number of questions in your mind about how the other students in your class will respond to this new student. Will they accept him? Do they believe he has as much right to the class as they do? Will they make fun of him? Will they be curious about his handicap to the point of embarrassing him? Will they be intimidated by his handicap and avoid associating with him? Basically you want to find out what kinds of attitudes the other students have toward someone with this kind of handicap. What are some ways you could find out?

How are attitudes formed and changed?

> Attitudes are formed and changed through experiences.

Attitudes are formed from each person's daily experiences. If experiences prove enjoyable, the person is likely to develop a positive attitude (a tendency to respond in a positive manner). On the other hand, if experiences prove to be unenjoyable, the person is likely to form a negative attitude. Similarly attitudes are formed about concepts, items, conditions and collections of objects. For example, if a student's experiences with books, other children, and teachers have been largely positive, then the students is likely to have a positive attitude about going to school.

The strength of attitudes depend primarily on the intensity of the feelings aroused by experiences.

The importance of the cognitive or knowledge-gained aspect of experience in learning is obvious, so we will not dwell on it here. The affective or feeling aspect of experiences, however, is not so well understood. Yet, it is primarily the feelings that people have in association with experiences that give attitudes their strengths.

Recently the affective or feeling aspect of experiences has received much attention as an important variable in learning. Strong attitudes usually result from experiences that cause strong feelings (either positive or negative). Consequently, the success of an instructional program can well depend upon the affective or feeling aspect of the experiences it provides. Since people's feelings are a potentially important component of attitudes, they need to be carefully considered when we attempt to understand the importance of attitudes to success in teaching handicapped students in regular classes.

Both information and feelings associated with experiences are important in developing attitudes.

Here is an example of a way in which an attitude might be changed through experience: A child may have formed a negative attitude toward taking cough medicine. His experiences to date have been that all cough medicine tastes awful. If, however, the child were presented with a spoonful of red-colored cough medicine that was cherry flavored, the child may form a new attitude about cough medicine; one which differentiates between cough medicine which is red and cough medicine which is some other color. It is also possible that this new experience may tend to reduce some of the negative feeling that had previously been associated with cough medicine.

Consider the following hypothetical situation.

Luke's parents don't want him to take a workshop course because he is deaf. They are afraid that because he cannot hear the saws and drills and other shop equipment, that he is likely to have a serious accident. Which of the following approaches would be most likely to change Luke's parents' attitude about his taking the course.

- Assure them that safety is a high priority item in your shop.
- Let them know that no student has ever been hurt in the shop since you've been teaching.
- Offer to show them safety features of the shop equipment.
- Show them a set of shop safety procedures designed for someone who can't hear.

Why are attitudes often hard to change?

Attitudes are hard to change when they are supported by a lot of reasons.

The more information that a person has to support an attitude, the harder it will be to change that attitude. For example, it would probably be easier to encourage a paraplegic child in a mainstream sewing class if the child had had no previous experiences in mainstream classes, than it would if the child had had several previous experiences that caused the child to feel disliked, incompetent and frustrated.

Attitudes are hard to change when they involve strong feelings.

Sometimes people have very strong attitudes about things, but are unable to say exactly why they do. They may have forgotten the original reasons which supported the attitude. Or, the attitude may be based more on feelings than on reasons. In either case, such attitudes can be very hard to change because it is not possible to identify the reasons which supported their development in the first place.

Attitudes are harder to change when they have been internalized - in other words they have become part of the person.

Like habits, attitudes sometimes become a part of the person. Attitudes that are formed early and strongly reinforced in the family tend to resist change. If an attitude becomes a part of how a person sees himself, or a part of how others see him, the attitude can be said to have been internalized. When this happens, the attitude becomes a part of the way this person is characterized. For example, a parent who has had a child with mild retardation might have a strong positive attitude toward meeting the needs of children with educational handicaps and, may be active in the National Association for Retarded Citizens (NARC). This parent's initial concern for children with retardation has led her into a number of activities which support this attitude, and which at the same time have caused her to be characterized by others as a "supporter" of NARC goals. Having committed so much effort to the cause of drawing attention to the problems of mental retardation, and having received a degree of recognition for these efforts, it is unlikely that this parent's attitude toward the goals of the NARC could be easily changed.

Attitudes which are supported by complex reasons are difficult to change.

Being willing to listen objectively to views which are contrary to one's own is not easy for most people. It requires time, effort and a willingness to change. Also, sorting and weighing new information to see how it supports or contradicts the information and attitude that one already has requires a similar effort. On top of this, many attitudes and reasons are quite complex, making reexamination in light of new information even more difficult.

Consider the plight of a teacher who is prepared and eagar to individualize a carpentry class for a blind student who is equally eager to learn. Upon contacting the student's parents, however, the teacher learns

that the parents are against the idea for the following reasons:

(1) Several years ago the parents had let the child participate in a home economics class with non-handicapped students, and their child had received some minor burns from the stove. Since then the parents were reluctant to let their child be in any class where there was even a remote possibility of harm from class activities.

(2) The parents were also against allowing their child to be in any class made up primarily of nonhandicapped students, fearing that their child would suffer from unkind remarks and from not being able to perform as well.

Furthermore, the parents are not interested in listening to reasons why the teacher feels that such a class would be good for this student. Such situations are not uncommon.

Check your understanding of why attitudes are often hard to change by deciding whether the following statements are "true" or "false":

Attitudes that are supported by a lot of reasons are more difficult to change than ones which are not.

Attitudes are easy to change when they involve strong feelings that don't have easily identifiable supporting reasons.

When an attitude has been internalized by a person it becomes harder to change.

Attitudes are easy to change when they are supported by complex reasons because the person holding the attitude is easily influenced by new information.

Attitudes Which Can Affect Success in Teaching Handicapped Students in Regular Education Classes

In this section of the module we will examine attitudes and feelings which could be important in teaching handicapped students in mainstream classes.

Whose attitudes are involved in the instruction of handicapped students in regular education classes?

> Attitudes of the following persons can be important in teaching handicapped students in mainstream classes.
>
> vocational education instructor
> handicapped students
> nonhandicapped students in the class
> parents of handicapped students
> others (including other teachers and school personnel, and community leaders).

In order to develop a climate of positive attitudes to support instruction of handicapped students in regular classrooms, we must first identify those persons whose attitudes are likely to be important. Although the specific persons whose attitudes are most significant will vary from one situation to another, the attitudes of two people are invariably important. They are the vocational education instructor and the handicapped student. It is obvious that this would be so since they are the principal participants in the learning process. If the vocational education instructor approaches the task of teaching the handicapped student with an attitude of acceptance and confidence, this will probably have a positive effect on the handicapped student's attitude. Likewise, if the student feels the teacher's acceptance and optimism, he is more likely to be confident and motivated to try.

Others whose attitudes may be significant include the parents of the handicapped students and the nonhandicapped students in the classroom. Just

how important the parents' attitudes are in a given situation would probably depend upon the age of the student and how independently that student functioned. Similarly, the importance of the attitudes of the nonhandicapped peers is probably also influenced by the age of the students involved.

The attitudes of other teachers and personnel at the school and the attitudes of community leaders may also be important in some instances. Having the support of the local school district and of members of the broader community can provide an atmosphere of support for vocational education teachers and handicapped students alike.

> See how many persons (by job title or role) you can name whose attitude could be important to teaching handicapped students in mainstream classes.

What are the bases for some common attitudes which discourage success in teaching handicapped students in mainstream classes?

> There are basically two different attitudes that people can have about teaching handicapped students in mainstream classes. Some are for it. While some are against it.

There are, however, many degrees of being for or against which generally correspond to how strongly the person feels about the issue. There are also many reasons for being for or against. These will be discussed a little later. First, however, we need to draw a distinction between an attitude and the basis for an attitude. You'll recall that we have defined an attitude as a tendency to respond in either a positive or a negative way to something. The "something" that we are concerned about in this module is how people feel about teaching handicapped students in mainstream classes. The basis for an attitude, on the other hand, is the reason(s) or rationale(s) a person has for a given attitude.

See if you can distinguish between the attitude and the basis for the attitude in the following example: Mr. Morgan has a son whose listening problems are causing the son to have trouble learning to read. The teacher has suggested that the son work with the special education teacher for half an hour each day to improve his auditory perception which appears to be at the heart of the reading problem. Mr. Morgan, however, does not want his son to be in any special education classes because he remembers the stereotype of the special education students from his own school days as being the social and educational misfits who never were able to catch up with the rest of the class. And, he didn't want his son to be identified in that way. What was Mr. Morgan's attitude? What was the basis for his attitude?

One common basis for negative attitudes toward teaching handicapped students in mainstream classes is the concern that regular vocational education teachers, who are not specially trained, cannot teach handicapped students effectively. This reasoning assumes that teaching students with handicaps is so different, or requires so much more individualization, than teaching non-handicapped students, that it is beyond the capability of the mainstream vocational education teachers. It further assumes that all disabilities are so severe that they prevent the handicapped student from benefitting from a mainstream class. Neither assumption is accurate. Like all other students, handicapped students require some degree of individualization of their educational program in order to make it maximally effective for them. The question is, how much? The answer to the first question is that the degree of individualization needed depends on the student and his or her type and degree of handicap. The answer to the second question is that for many handicapped students, it is within the ability of the regular vocational education teacher to individualize to a sufficient degree, especially if some training is provided.

A second common basis for attitudes against teaching handicapped students in mainstream classes is concern over the level of effort required for teachers to individualize programs of instruction for handicapped students. It is often felt that although regular classroom teachers might be able to modify their classes to better meet the needs of handicapped students, the time and effort required would be above and beyond the call of duty.

For example, it might be felt that a teacher would have to plan for and conduct two separate classes in order to meet the needs of both handicapped and non-handicapped students.

A third concern often expressed is for the psychological or physical welfare of those involved. For example, a teacher may be concerned about the safety of a blind or deaf student in shop classes if they cannot see or hear the warning signals that machines give off when they are in operation. Or, the concern may be that attempts to modify certain classes for handicapped students would only result in frustration and failure for both the teacher and the student.

At the broadest level, some common bases for attitudes which discourage success include concern for:

- the ability of the instructor to teach
- the ability of the student to learn
- the level of effort required from the instructor and/or the handicapped student
- the psychological welfare as well as the physical safety of handicapped students
- for other students.

All of these concerns are reasonable, but too often they have been used to automatically exclude handicapped students from mainstream classes. And too often they have discouraged school administrators and teachers from considering handicapped students as individuals having strengths as well as weaknesses.

It is obvious that teaching students with physical, mental, social and communications handicaps is going to present some real challenges to the vocational education teacher. It will test the resourcefulness of both the teacher and the handicapped student. Also, there may be limitations on just how or how much the classroom environment can be modified in order to

meet the special needs of a given student. The point, however, is that such concerns often support negative attitudes toward mainstreaming handicapped students. As a result, decisions about class enrollment are often made without giving proper consideration to the motivation and compensatory abilities of the individual handicapped student, without giving proper attention to just what is involved in learning particular skills and what alternative ways there are of learning these skills given a particular handicap, and without looking at what modifications to the curriculum and classroom environment are possible which would support learning given a particular student and handicap. In short, concerns over the physical, mental, social, and communication handicaps of students support attitudes which are against mainstreaming handicapped students. And, since these attitudes by their very nature tend to generalize to everyone thought to have a handicap, the needs and special abilities of the individual handicapped student is discounted.

> A young woman with only one leg has learned to ski and enjoys it tremendously. Her handicap is obvious and it would be natural for a ski instructor to focus on her handicap in evaluating her chances of learning to ski. What would not be obvious, unless one met her and talked to her, is her determination to participate in a full range of human activities despite her handicap.

What are some common bases for attitudes which support success in teaching handicapped students in mainstream classes?

> Handicapped students have a legal and moral right to an equal education.

The Vocational Education Amendments Act of 1968 (PL 90-576) assures that any school district offering vocational education will do so on an equitable basis, even though students may have a disadvantaged background or be mentally or physically handicapped. Furthermore, the Education of the Handicapped Amendments of 1974 (PL 93-380, Part B) states that

> "to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not handicapped, and that special

classes, separate schooling, or other removal of handicapped children from the regular education environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily."

These public laws and amendments clearly place the responsibility of equal education for handicapped students with the local educational agency. They also emphasize that handicapped students should be taught in mainstream classes wherever possible. Being aware of and accepting the legal and moral rights of handicapped students to an equal education is one important basis in teaching handicapped students in mainstream classes. In effect, it involves recognizing that teaching handicapped students is part of a teacher's job, and not simply an option or a local policy.

> Handicapped students are on the same continuum with nonhandicapped students in terms of individualizing instruction to meet individual needs.

Every student is different. Each has his or her unique strengths and weaknesses. They also have different learning styles. Some students learn better through their ears, others through their eyes, and still others by being able to touch and feel. Teachers have learned that they can instruct more effectively by individualizing their curriculum, as well as their classroom, to match the learning styles of their students. Recognizing that handicapped students, like nonhandicapped students, also have strengths, weaknesses, and preferred learning styles is another important basis for an attitude which will support success in teaching handicapped students in mainstream classes. This recognition of individual differences among handicapped students leads to more productive thinking on the part of the teacher. Instead of asking himself if the student will be able to learn, the teacher asks himself how is the best way to teach.

> Acceptance of the handicapped student by the teacher, other students, and other school personnel fosters positive attitudes.

Another important basis for attitudes which support success in teaching handicapped students in mainstream classes is acceptance of the handicapped

student. This differs somewhat from believing that the handicapped student has a legal or moral right to be in the class. It has more to do with the handicapped student being accepted and treated as a person with reasonable expectations of acquiring the knowledge and skills that the course is designed to teach. It also involves the handicapped student's self-concept, and being able to accept himself as a full fledged student in the class.

> The participation of handicapped students in regular classes has important benefits other than just learning the specific skills that are taught.

In addition to learning specific vocational skills, handicapped students also need to learn to interact and compete with nonhandicapped students before they are expected to compete as responsible citizens.

> Reflect on the following points and consider how each is likely to support the successful instruction of handicapped students in mainstream classes:
>
> - knowing and accepting that handicapped students have a legal and moral right to an equal education.
> - seeing handicapped students on the same continuum as nonhandicapped students in terms of needing individualized instruction to meet individual needs.
> - accepting handicapped students as legitimate students.
> - believing that a mainstream education is important to handicapped students if they are going to successfully participate in society.

How can important attitudes which are relevant to success in teaching handicapped students in mainstream classes be identified?

We can start off by listing the questions we need to answer in order to identify relevant attitudes.

> Questions we need to answer:
>
> What is the situation?
>
> Whose attitudes are possibly relevant to the situation?
>
> What attitudes are possibly relevant to the situation?
>
> What are the possible bases for any relevant attitudes?

First, we need to know what the situation is. We need to identify any obvious goals or problems in the situation. An example of a situation might be as follows: You teach beginning typing at a high school and a paraplegic boy who is confined to a wheelchair has enrolled in your class. Your goal will be to teach him beginning typing along with all the nonhandicapped students in your class. The problems you see in trying to reach this goal are as follows:

- You are concerned that he may have trouble getting between your classes and other classes in a wheelchair.
- You are concerned that the typewriter in your classroom may not be within reach because of the wheelchair.
- You are concerned over how well other students in the classroom will accept the boy.
- You are concerned as to how the boy will feel in your class if he is not readily accepted by the other students.
- You are concerned over the extra work that will be involved on your part in trying to modify procedures and equipment in the classroom to meet the boy's needs.
- You are angry because the school administration has permitted the boy's enrollment without first consulting with you and offering to help work out some of the problems which are not solely of an instructional nature.
- Finally, you really believe that the student has a right to be in your class, and that you have a responsibility to do your best to teach him to type.

Next, we need to know whose attitudes are involved. By reviewing what we know about the situation, the goal, and the problems the teacher is worried about in trying to reach this goal, we can see that the following person's attitudes might possibly be involved:

Yours (the vocational educator's)
The handicapped student's
The non-handicapped student's
The school principal's

The attitudes of others may also be involved but they are not clearly indicated from the information which describes their particular situation.

After deciding whose attitudes are possibly involved, look back over the concerns you had in trying to modify your curriculum and classroom to teach basic typing to a paraplegic student. Restate them so that their relevance to the goal is obvious. This might best be done by looking at those persons whose attitudes are possibly involved one at a time.

The initial thing to do is to check your own attitude. How do you feel about the situation and problems you see?

For example, in the hypothetical situation that has just been described. you feel that it will be difficult to successfully teach basic typing to the paraplegic student if:

- the student has trouble getting from one class to another
- the typewriters in the classroom cannot be properly operated by the boy while sitting in a wheelchair
- you will need to modify procedures and equipment in the classroom to meet the student's individual needs
- if the school administration does not help solve problems which are not purely instructional, such as getting to and from classes and modifying typewriters.
- the student is not readily accepted by other students in the class

These are some of the known problems, which if not solved are likely to contribute to your having a negative attitude toward teaching beginning typing to this student. On the other hand, we also know that you believe that this paraplegic student has a right to be in the class, and that you feel responsibility as a teacher to do your best to teach him. This belief helps support a positive attitude, and counters the effect of some of the problem.

> The second thing we want to do is to find out as much as we can about the attitudes of other people who may be involved.

So far in this example, we have concentrated on assessing your own attitudes, however, we don't know exactly how the target student, the handicapped student, the other students in the class, and the principal feel about the situation. All we know for sure is that you feel that there are likely to be problems and that some of those problems involve the paraplegic student, other students in the class and the principal. Therefore, we need to find out more information about how these other people feel. As we discussed earlier in the module, the best way to find out how someone feels about something is to ask that person directly, and then check to see if the person's actual behavior confirms their stated feelings. For example, you might talk directly to the principal to find out if he understands that there will have to be modifications to one of the typewriters and possibly to the classroom in order to meet this student's needs, and if he will assist with the necessary modifications. In this way the principal's attitude can be clarified. Similarly, it is possible to talk with teachers who have previously taught the paraplegic student and/or check school records, to find out if the student has been well-accepted by non-handicapped students in past classes. In these ways, existing attitudes can be clarified before action is taken.

Now, see if you can follow the steps that we have just gone through in order to identify relevant attitudes in the following example. If you have trouble, look back to the procedure described earlier.

Situation: You teach construction trades at the high school level and a deaf student wants to take your class. You have identified the following problems:

- You are concerned about the student's safety in the shop since he cannot hear the equipment when it's in operation.
- You are concerned about the modification that would have to be made to make the shop safe for the students, such as warning lights to indicate machines are in operation.
- You know the parents of the student, and they have tended to be overly protective in the past.
- There are a couple of fellows enrolled in the class who are likely to give another student with an obvious handicap a difficult time.
- You have always been highly successful in teaching your students well and in helping them find jobs later, but now you are concerned that you might not be able to teach a deaf student or will not be so successful in placing him later.
- You are concerned that the individual attention you will have to give the deaf student will result in a less effective program for the other students in your class.

Once attitudes which are relevant to the goal of teaching handicapped students have been identified, the next step is to find ways of changing negative attitudes and developing attitudes which will support this goal. So far, the examples we have worked with have assumed that it is desirable and appropriate to enroll and teach handicapped students in regular classes. There may be some instances, however, in which it would be better for the vocational education teacher to recommend a special class for the student. If, for example, it is clearly impossible for the teacher to make the classroom safe, or to modify the curriculum and/or equipment sufficiently, a separate special class might be appropriate. These are decisions that must be made by the school administrator, the teacher, the student, and the student's parents on a case-by-case basis.

Before going on, it will be helpful to review at this point some of the important things we know about attitudes and about how attitudes are formed and changed.

For example, we know that:

- Attitudes are important because they predict behavior--a student with a positive attitude is more likely to learn
- Positive attitudes come from pleasant, rewarding experiences
- Attitudes about certain people or things tend to generalize to other people or things
- Attitudes tend to be contagious--they may be easily transmitted from one person to another
- Attitudes change when there are changes in the intensity of feelings and/or changes in the information base which supports the attitude.

This information suggests the following ways of changing negative attitudes and developing positive attitudes:

- Provide pleasant, rewarding experiences in order to reduce negative feelings and to develop positive ones
- Provide new information which supports a positive attitude
- Show the dissimilarities between new situations and previous, unpleasant situations
- Develop a positive attitude yourself--it will influence others.

What factors are important in encouraging positive attitudes toward handicapped students?

Now that we have identified some ways of developing supportive attitudes let's look at how these ways might be met in the specific situation where a paraplegic boy has enrolled in your beginning typing class.

Let's assume that in an effort to identify attitudes of relevant persons you have already talked to the principal and found that he is quite ready to assist you with any modification that would have to be made to the classroom and classroom equipment. Also assume that you have talked to other teachers

who have taught this student and found out that he is sensitive to how he is accepted by other non-handicapped students in the class, and that his perception of how he is accepted is likely to affect his attitude and performance in the typing class. You have already determined that your attitude could become negative if the following problems are not solved:

- A way must found of permitting the student to get from one class to another easily.

  Possible solution: prevent negative attitudes from forming by taking steps to help the student arrive in time. One alternative would be a buddy system, where another student in your class comes with him. Alternatively, a rearrangement of the schedule might be possible to allow extra time.

- The typewiter and classroom space must be modified so that at least one machine is easily accessible and can be operated from a wheelchair.

  Possible solution: find out how much space the student in a wheelchair will need in order to use a typewriter and move about in the classroom. Find an alternative table or make the arrangements to modify it. Locate the student where the need for aisle space is at a minimum.

- You must have time to think through and modify classroom procedure and curriculum to meet the needs of the paraplegic student.

  Possible solution: find out as much as you can about the student and about his disability. Consult with the special educator and others who know the student. Evaluate and modify your regular curriculum and classroom procedures in light of what you have learned. Make sure that your changes do <u>not</u> result in a "watered down" course but instead are tailored to make the most of the student's <u>strengths</u>.

- You must find ways of getting the other students to accept the paraplegic student, and of making him feel accepted.

  Possible solution: provide classroom experiences which convey acceptance by you and the non-handicapped students in your class. Ideas for doing this might come from talking with the school psychologist, other teachers, the student's parents, other students in the class, and the student himself about it. The experiences should be ones in which you feel confident that the student can achieve, that he cares about and in which he feels involved.

In reviewing those people whose attitudes are involved in the situation, it appears that nothing needs to be done to change the principal's attitudes, since in your discussion with him he has indicated his willingness and intent to help. However, it would help to do something about things that affect the handicapped student's attitude and the other students' attitudes.

> If you have been able to follow this example, let's see if you can apply what you have learned. Previously, we described a hypothetical situation in which you teach construction trades at the high school level. Review that description and decide in your own mind how you would change negative attitudes and develop positive attitudes.

As you read other modules in this series keep in mind that attitudes, though complex and elusive, are critical to everything that is suggested. You have an opportunity. Make the most of it and you'll like the way you feel.

Assessment Section

The questions in this section are intended as a check of your general understanding of the instructional considerations involved in teaching handicapped students in regular vocational classes.

The problems which follow are not "formula" questions in which a precise and exact answer is possible. Rather they are meant to stimulate your thinking and cause you to reflect on the content of the module as you write or type your response on separate sheets of paper.

If you intend sending your responses to a cooperating agency for evaluation, be sure that you

1. Indicate the complete name of the module
2. Number all responses (Questions 1a, 1b, etc.)
3. Enclose your name and return address.

Problem 1.

As part of understanding attitudes that may bear on mainstreaming handicapped students it is important to know how attitudes are formed. Discuss how each of the following things are important in forming attitudes:

a) pleasant and unpleasant experiences

b) information associated with experiences

c) feelings associated with experiences

Problem 2.

Discuss why attitudes are often hard to change when:

a) the attitude is supported by many reasons

b) the attitude involves strong feelings

c) a person has internalized the attitude and has made it a part of him or her

Problem 3.

The attitudes of many people can affect success in teaching handicapped students in regular vocational education classes. Discuss how attitudes of the following people may be important:

a) the vocational instructor

b) the handicapped student

c) non-handicapped students in the class

d) parents of handicapped students

Problem 4.

Think of a situation involving a student with some handicap (you specify the handicap) who has asked to take your class. Then use the following questions to discuss how important attitudes could be identified.

a) Whose attitudes are possibly relevant to the situation you thought of?

b) What attitudes are possibly relevant to the situation?

c) What are the possible bases for these relevant attitudes?